Queer Roots for the Diaspora
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A project such as this one, which has taken well over a decade to complete, owes much gratitude to the many who have offered their assistance along the way. Peggy McCracken generously read the entire manuscript and offered numerous suggestions and feedback. An invaluable mentor since she arrived at the University of Michigan, she chaired both my tenure and promotion committees. While such professional moments can often be quite stressful, under her leadership they felt much more like times of intense mentoring. My professional life—not just this book—owes much to her kindness, friendship, support, and guidance.

Over twenty years after my years as a graduate student, I still find myself thanking my dissertation advisers Nancy K. Miller and Francesca Canadé Sautman for their years of mentoring and guidance. Many of my colleagues would be envious to have had just one adviser like them; I was blessed with two. I was auditing Francesca’s course on African literature when I first presented some of the ideas that would become chapter 1 herein. Her encouragement from early on did much to keep me pursuing this project, and her invitation to speak at a conference entitled Migration, Memory, and Trace: Writing in French outside of the Hexagon, cosponsored by the CUNY Graduate Center and New York University in 2001, gave me the opportunity to share the earliest parts of this project with a wider audience. She continues to this day to be one of the strongest connections I maintain with my alma mater.

Nancy has continued to provide letters of reference long after the
end of my studies, as well as frequent advice on professional matters such as the job market and grant applications. She, too, invited me to share a later version of this work at a conference entitled Rites of Return: Poetics and Politics, cosponsored by Columbia University and the CUNY Graduate Center in 2008. She and Marianne Hirsch then included a revised version of this talk in their collection *Rites of Return: Diaspora Poetics and the Politics of Memory*. In my trips back to New York, frequent at times, less so at others, both Francesca and Nancy have always made time to catch up and renew their unending support.

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This book represents my first foray into archival research. Colleagues in French studies have regaled me with horror stories of their own experiences in the French archives. My own experiences on this side of the Atlantic were, on the contrary, quite pleasant. For this I wish to thank the librarians and staff of Duke University’s David M. Rubenstein Rare Book and Manuscript Library (for their assistance in consulting the Jim Grimsley Papers), as well as the Stanly County Public Library and its Margaret Johnson Heritage Room (where I did much of the research for chapter 6).

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Previous versions of various parts of this book have appeared elsewhere as the following:


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